

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth

For Immediate Release

Contact: Russ Levsen(Herseth)- 202-226-4449

HERSETH RESPONDS TO RULING ON CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

October 14, 2005, Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth today expressed her concern regarding two California District Court rulings that categorical exclusions should be subject to a comment and appeals process. Categorical exclusions are used to expedite Forest Service projects that “have been found either separately or cumulatively to have minor or no environmental effects.” Once a project has been designated a categorical exclusion, neither a formal NEPA analysis nor a public comment and appeals process are required.

Herseth said, “This ruling threatens the usefulness of categorical exclusions, which have proven to be valuable tools in managing a safe and healthy Black Hills National Forest. No two forests are alike, I and am concerned that this ruling will prove to be overly broad, and have unintended consequences on forests across the country. Categorical exclusions have been used in the Black Hills to allow the Forest Service to move swiftly on routine projects, and I will work to ensure that they can continue to be used in the future.”

Herseth noted that 13 current and pending categorical exclusion projects in the Black Hills National Forest have been halted due to this ruling including the Black Hills Power power-line rebuild from Custer to Hill City.

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Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of

Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.